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DEPARTMENT FOR DS/DSS, DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA AND DS/DS/ICI  
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TAGS: ASEC CAS AMGT APER SG

SUBJECT: SENEGAL: ANNUAL OVERSES SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (OSAC)  
CRIME AND SAFTY REPORTS

REF: STATE 199547

#### II. OVERALL CRIE AND SAFETY SITUATION

¶1. Dakar is a high-crime post according to the number and frequency of crimes committed. Like most large cities, the full spectrum of criminal activity can be found. Official Americans, businesspersons, and visitors are victimized primarily by crimes of opportunity, e.g., pick-pocketing, purse-snatching, thefts from vehicles, minor assaults, and burglaries taking advantage of unlocked doors and windows. The level of crime has made walking outside at night not recommended. Americans walking in downtown Dakar are often approached by aggressive vendors and street criminals looking to sell something for an inflated price or a potential victim.

¶2. After several years of relative quiet in the Casamance, there has been an increase in armed banditry and fighting between rebel separatists and the Senegalese military. The U.S. Embassy sent a warden notice on December 6 advising against all non-essential travel to the Ziguinchor region, including Cap Skirring. Throughout the history of the insurgency, there have been few incidents of fighting within the city of Ziguinchor and the resort area of Cap Skirring. Rural areas have been the sites of sporadic violent attacks on Senegalese military and civilian personnel and, on rare occasions, tourists.

#### II. POLITICAL VIOLENCE

¶3. Senegal is considered one of the most stable democracies in West Africa. There has been no known terrorist targeting of private American citizens to date. Public protests, demonstrations, and strikes occur regularly and often become violent. Special consideration should be taken in early 2007 as this is an election year and an increase in demonstrations is expected. Americans should avoid large political gatherings as riot police may quickly resort to batons and tear gas as a means of crowd control.

#### III. POST-SPECIFIC CONCERNS

¶4. The single greatest danger posed to Americans in Dakar is vehicle accidents, especially at night. Drivers in Dakar are aggressive, unpredictable and untrained. Poor traffic markers, changing traffic patterns, and road construction throughout the city confuse even the savviest of drivers. Taxis and buses are often in poor working condition.

#### IV. POLICE RESPONSE

¶5. The police, like many police forces in Africa, are under-funded, -staffed, and -equipped. Police often request money for what Americans consider routine police duties. Dakar is patrolled predominantly by the police, who typically wear green/khaki uniforms and either a red or black beret. The Gendarmes, a military unit of police, wear blue uniforms or green fatigues and blue berets. The

downtown area of Dakar is primarily under police jurisdiction. Outside of Dakar, one finds Gendarmes. Normally both law enforcement bodies will only be able to provide rudimentary assistance. In the event of any emergency, call the embassy at 823-4296 (Monday - Friday, (0800-1700) or 823-6520 after hours.

**¶6.** If arrested, ask to contact the American Embassy. This request is not always honored expeditiously and may need to be repeated. Do not ignore a policeman's lawful/reasonable orders. Becoming belligerent will only exacerbate the situation and prolong your detention.

#### **¶IV. MEDICAL EMERGENCIES**

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**¶7.** Several hospitals and clinics in Dakar can treat a wide variety of injuries and illnesses. There is inadequate in-patient psychiatric care, though there is very good office-based psychiatry. Public hospitals do not meet U.S. standards, but several private clinics are at the level of small European hospitals, and even approach U.S. community hospital standards. The Embassy maintains a list of physicians and other health care professionals who will see U.S.-citizen patients. The Embassy does not guarantee their services or recommend any of the physicians. Medical facilities outside Dakar are limited.

**¶8.** French medications are more readily available than American drugs, and the limited selection of American drugs in stock is often listed under the French trade names. Medications may be obtained at pharmacies throughout Dakar and in other areas frequented by tourists, and are sometimes less expensive than those in the U.S. Travelers should carry a supply of any needed prescription medicines, along with copies of the prescriptions, including the generic name for the drugs, and a supply of preferred over-the-counter medications.

#### **V. TIPS ON HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM**

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**¶9.** Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. If one must carry cash, break it up and place it in different areas on one's person. Do not carry credit cards unless one plans to use them on a specific outing.

**¶10.** Senegalese law requires that one have valid identifying documents at all times. Make photocopies of one's passport, driver's license, and other ID and carry copies while on the street. As a rule, the police do not distinguish between original documents and photocopies. Place original documents, including passports, into secure storage at your hotel or place of business.

**¶11.** Do not wear expensive jewelry, or necklaces of any value, as these are targeted for snatch and grab type crimes. Do not carry backpacks or fanny packs, as they brand an individual as a tourist. Carry bags with short straps that can easily be placed under one's arm.

**¶12.** Never accept anything from anyone on the street unless you are planning to buy the item. This is also true for anyone presenting you with a "gift." This is a favorite ploy of street criminals, who will then request money in return. Minimize your verbal contact with anyone other than legitimate contacts you may have. Just say "no" and be persistent and forceful.

**¶13.** Never walk alone at night or drive into unfamiliar areas. If one does drive and park, it is common practice for a street person to offer to watch the car while one shops or eats in a restaurant. Paying the 100 CFA (\$.20) after you return can deter mischief directed at the vehicle. Park in well-lit and well-traveled areas, if possible.

**¶14.** Always negotiate a price before getting into a taxi. Although difficult given the current construction situation, have the driver use only the main roads into town, no shortcuts, and never get into a taxi that is already occupied. If the cab stops to pick up someone else, tell the driver that you will not pay him. The driver may be trying to set up a pick-pocketing.

**¶15.** At the airport: If one's job does not call for extensive use of a laptop computer, then do not carry one. Customs can hold any

expensive electronic device for an exoneration period to ensure that one is not attempting to resell the item and avoid customs duties. Upon clearing customs, one will be bombarded by "expediters" and "taxi handlers" who want money. Avoid these individuals. The taxi fare is between 3,000-4,000 CFA francs for trips between downtown and the airport. (Fares are slightly higher at night.)

VII. FURTHER INFORMATION

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¶16. All Embassy offices can be reached by calling 823-4296 Monday - Friday (0800-1700) or 823-6520 after hours. The Regional Security Officer John Bray can also be reached using the numbers above.

VII. OSAC COUNTRY COUNCIL

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¶17. Dakar's OSAC Country Council meets quarterly. Points of contact for the council are RSO John Bray [brayfj2@state.gov](mailto:brayfj2@state.gov) and ARSO Barrett Bishop [bishopb@state.gov](mailto:bishopb@state.gov). They both can be reached by calling 823-4296 Monday - Friday, (0800-1700) or 823-6520 after hours.

JACKSON